

PHIL 101  
**Introduction to Philosophy**  
Spring 2017

**Professor Lisa Tessman**

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Office: Library Tower 1215

Office hours: M/W 10:45-11:45 or by appointment.

**Required texts:**

No texts need to be purchased; all are available electronically.

Unless otherwise indicated, all texts are available as pdf files (under “Course Reserves”) on Blackboard. Those that are not available as pdf files can be accessed through a link provided.

**Course Description:**

In this course students will both study historical and contemporary philosophical texts, and learn to do philosophy themselves. The texts focus on philosophical problems such as: “What is reality?” “What can we know?” “Is there a human nature?” “Does God exist?” “Why be good?” “Are values relative?” “What is the relationship between society and an individual?” “Is government justified?” “What should be done about injustices?” We will read traditional philosophical work as well as challenges to the tradition by those who take different approaches to doing philosophy. Students will learn to formulate philosophical questions, understand and critique difficult philosophical texts, and develop arguments to support their own philosophical positions.

**Course Objectives:**

- To familiarize students with some historical and contemporary philosophical texts, and with the major subfields of Philosophy.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills, such as: understanding difficult texts; analyzing, constructing, and responding critically to arguments; engaging in conceptual thinking; developing, articulating, and defending their own positions both verbally and in writing; thinking in complex and original, but still disciplined, ways.
- Learning Outcome: This course satisfies the Humanities General Education Requirement; thus in this course, students “will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.” The course also satisfies the Harpur College Writing Requirement, so students will “obtain considerable experience and receive significant guidance or instruction in writing.”

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) **Preparation and participation, worth a total of 40% of the final grade, broken down as follows:**
  - a) **preparation for lectures is checked with quizzes, which are worth 20% of the final grade;**
  - b) **participation in discussion sections is worth 20% of the final grade.**

Students are expected to prepare for and attend all lectures and discussion sections. Please avoid scheduling travel, appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. If you miss class, you will still be completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day; please get in touch with another student to find out what you missed.

Please take notes by hand during class, and do not use any electronic devices during lectures or discussion sections. Most people learn better by taking hand-written notes, because doing so prevents us from writing down too much verbatim; it instead forces us to summarize ideas or at least choose which points are the most important ones to write down, and this requires *thinking*. There are exceptions to this generalization, so if you have a particular reason for needing to take notes on an electronic device, please see me ahead of time for permission.

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to attending and participating in lectures and discussion section meetings, students are expected to do at least 9 ½ hours of course-related work *outside of class* each week during the semester. This includes time spent completing assigned readings, taking notes on the readings, preparing questions and comments on the readings to bring to lectures and/or discussion section meetings, reviewing material before in-class essays, and revising essays.

**Preparation for lectures:**

Prepare for each lecture by completing the assigned reading, taking careful notes, and jotting down any questions that you may have. Students' level of preparation will be checked with frequent quizzes. Quizzes are graded on a credit/no credit basis, and each student is permitted to skip two quizzes without penalty (save these for times when you are out sick!). Quizzes are closed-book but open-notes (hand-written notes only, unless you have special permission; you must have taken the notes yourself). If you miss a quiz for any reason, it may not be made up for credit.

**Participation in discussion sections:**

Especially if you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in classes, you might want to spend some time in advance writing down what you would like to say in discussion sections. Every student is expected to regularly contribute ideas to discussions; to facilitate this for each other, please make the classroom a place for disagreement, but not for disrespect. Excellent participation involves consistent, thoughtful contributions to discussions: expressing your understanding of the material, developing and thinking critically about your own positions, and listening carefully and respectfully to others. Participation in lectures is encouraged, but not graded.

**Grading of participation:**

Students who miss a discussion section in which participation is graded, and who have a documented (medical or similar) reason for the absence, may visit their TA during office hours to discuss the material, and this discussion will count as graded participation. Students who miss discussion sections without documentation will receive a zero on that day's graded participation. Participation is graded according to a point system. It is the quality, and not just the quantity, of participation that matters. Participation points can be earned in any of the 12 discussion sections in which participation is graded (marked on the schedule with an asterisk):

0 points: absent or inattentive.

1 point: listening attentively for the full class, but not participating sufficiently to earn 2 points.

2 points: contributing to the class in a substantial way; this can be done by demonstrating a good understanding of the week's readings and lectures (or of material presented or read in the discussion section) and by offering a well thought out original idea in response.

21 points or more = A; 20 points = A-; 19 points = B+; 18 points = B; 17 points = B-; 16 points = C+; 15 points = C; 14 points = C-; 13 points = D; 12 points or below = F.

- 2) Four in-class essays, worth a total of 60% of the final grade, broken down as follows:**
- a) four essays; the first three essays are each worth 10% of the final grade, and the last essay is worth 15%, for a total of 45% of the final grade;**
  - b) re-writes of the first three essays, each worth 5% of the final grade, for a total of 15% of the final grade.**

For the in-class essays, you may use all hand written notes that you have taken yourself, but you may *not* use any kind of electronic device or any printed material. You may *not* bring notes taken from sources that were not assigned (e.g. Wikipedia, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, etc.), or that were copied from another student. Any student who uses an electronic device, printed material, sources or notes on sources that were not assigned, or notes that were copied from another student, will receive a zero on the essay (and rewrite).

Because you have access to notes for the in-class essays, you do not need to *memorize* anything in this course. However, don't let this fool you into thinking that you don't need to study. The essay questions are difficult; you will not just be asked to regurgitate material. An essay that simply explains the text in the same way that it has been explained or discussed in lecture or discussion section will receive a failing grade. Essays must present original, carefully thought out, and well supported ideas that engage with the readings; the essays should demonstrate both that you have understood the material and that you have something of your own to contribute in response. Because there is limited time to plan and write the essay in class, it is a good idea to prepare by doing a lot of your thinking ahead of time. Make sure that you understand each text well, and then try to develop several interesting and thoughtful things that you could say about each text.

Each of the first three essays must be rewritten. The rewritten essay is due (via turnitin) one week from the time that the essays are returned (even if you are not in class when they are returned). You must also return your original in-class essay (with your TA's comments on it) to your TA in order for your rewrite to be graded. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with me or with your TA to discuss your essay before you rewrite it. It may also be helpful to visit the Writing Center (<https://www.binghamton.edu/writing/writing-center/>) for help with rewriting. Rewrites must exhibit substantive revisions and will be graded entirely on *improvement*. During the rewriting process, you may consult assigned texts as well as your notes, but not any additional sources. If you do consult other sources (whether print or online), this will be considered academic dishonesty and you will receive a zero on the essay.

An in-class essay may be made up only with a documented medical excuse (emergency or illness). Students who miss an in-class essay due to documented emergency or illness should notify their TA before the time of the essay if possible, and schedule a make-up time; students who miss an in-class essay without documentation will receive a zero on the essay.

**Disability-related equal access accommodations:** I am happy to make accommodations (e.g. extended time, quiet environment, etc.) for any student with a documented need for it. Please talk with me *by Mon Jan 30* if you are requesting accommodations (talk with me by this date even if you do not yet have your documentation). If you are unsure about whether or not you need, or qualify for, accommodations, I encourage you to visit the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office: <http://www.binghamton.edu/ssd/>.

**Plagiarism:** I follow the Philosophy Department policy on plagiarism (below). Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code. Every student is required to pass an online test (by Feb 6) on how to recognize and avoid plagiarism; students will not receive credit for essays unless they have passed this test.

#### Philosophy Department Guidelines on Academic Honesty

The Philosophy Department considers plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to be serious breaches of the code of ethics governing academic life. They are also violations of Harpur College and Binghamton University policies.

In order to contribute to a culture of Academic Honesty within both the Department and the University, the Philosophy Department has agreed on the following guidelines:

- 1) Instructors will include a statement describing their policy regarding Academic Honesty on all course syllabi.
- 2) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will formally bring the violation to the attention of the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee by either:
  - a. submitting an Admission of Dishonesty Form that has been signed by the student,
  - or*
  - b. initiating a hearing before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee.
- 3) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor for the course will not give the student credit for the assignment, whether or not the student re-submits honest work.
- 4) Instructors will decide what further grade consequences are appropriate in response to the dishonesty at their own discretion; the typical consequence is a grade of 'F' for the course.

## Schedule

### **Week 1:**

Wed. Jan 18: Introduction to the course.

Fri. Jan. 20: Discussion section.

### **Part I: Metaphysics and Epistemology**

### **Week 2:**

Mon. Jan 23:

Read before class: Plato, *Meno*.

Wed. Jan 25:

Read before class: Plato, *Republic*, Book V from 472a to end; Book VI from 504d to end; Book VII through 524d [These numbers refer to the marginal pagination].

Fri. Jan. 27: Discussion section.

### **Week 3:**

Mon. Jan. 30:

Read before class: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, First, Second, and Third Meditation.

Wed. Feb 1:

Read before class: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Meditation.

Fri. Feb 3: \*Discussion section.

Read before section: Isaac Asimov, "Reason" from *I, Robot* (1941).

### **Week 4:**

Mon. Feb. 6:

Read before class: The UNC Writing Center handout on fallacies.

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/fallacies/>

Exercise to complete before class (leave yourself at least an hour for this): complete the tutorials, and take the tests, on "How to Recognize Plagiarism" at:

<https://www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html>

*Before* class time, you must email your TA the certificate showing that you have passed the tests. Students who have not passed the test will not be permitted to write essays for credit.

Wed. Feb. 8:

In-class essay #1.

Fri. Feb. 10: \*Discussion section.

Bring to section: an example of a fallacy in a newspaper or journal article, a blog, website, or other publication (please bring a hard copy).

**Week 5:**

Mon. Feb 13:

Read before class: John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*  
Book One, Chapter II, sections 1-5;  
Book Two, Chapter I, sections 1-8;  
Book Two, Chapter II, sections 1-3;  
Book Two, Chapter VIII, sections 8-17.

Wed. Feb 15:

Read before class: David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section II, Section III, Section IV, and Part I of Section V.

Fri. Feb 17:

\*Discussion section.

**Week 6:**

Mon. Feb 20:

Read before class: Lorraine Code, "Knowledge and Subjectivity," Chapter 2 (pgs. 27-70) from *What Can She Know?* (1991).

Wed. Feb 22:

Read before class: Linda Martín Alcoff, "On Judging Epistemic Credibility: Is Social Identity Relevant?" In *Engendering Rationalities* (2001), pgs. 53-80.

Fri. Feb 24:

\*Discussion section.

**Week 7:**

Mon. Feb 27:

Read before class: Tamar Gendler, "Alief in Action (and Reaction)," *Mind and Language* Vol. 23, No. 5 (2008), pgs. 552-585.

Wed. March 1:

Read before class: Tamar Gendler, "On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias," *Philosophical Studies* (2011).

Fri. March 3:

No class.

**Week 8:**

Mon. March 6:

No class.

Wed. March 8:

In-class essay #2.

Fri. March 10:

\*Discussion section.

Before section, go to <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/Registration>, then click on "take a test" and take at least three different tests at:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

## Part II: Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy

### Week 9:

Mon. March 13:

Read before class: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Chapter I.

Wed. March 15:

Read before class: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter II and Chapter IV.

The text is not available as a pdf file. It is available at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11224/11224-h/11224-h.htm>

Fri. March 17:

\*Discussion section.

### Week 10:

Mon. March 20:

Read before class: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring, 1972), pp. 229-243.

Wed. March 22:

Read before class: Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 108, No. 4 (2001), pp. 814-834.

Fri. March 24:

\*Discussion section.

### Week 11:

Mon. March 27:

Read before class: Christopher Gowans, "Moral Theory, Moral Dilemmas, and Moral Responsibility," in H.E. Mason, Ed., *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory* (pgs. 199-215). (1996).

Wed. March 29:

Read before class: Margaret Urban Walker, "Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics," chapter 7 (pgs. 103-116) in *Moral Contexts* (2003).

Fri. March 31:

\*Discussion section.

### Week 12:

Mon. April 3:

Read before class: David Wong, "Pluralism and Ambivalence," in Michael Krausz, Ed., *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology* (pgs. 254-267). (2010).

Wed. April 5:

In-class essay #3.

Fri. April 7:

\*Discussion section.

**Week 13:**

Mon. April 10: No class.

Wed. April 12: No class.

Fri. April 14: No class.

**Week 14:**

Mon. April 17: No class.

Wed. April 19:  
Revising workshop.

Fri. April 21: \*Discussion section.

**Week 15:**

Mon. April 24:

Read before class: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII and XIV.

Wed. April 26

Read before class: John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (also referred to as Book II of *Two Treatises of Government*), Chapters I - III.

Fri. April 28: \*Discussion section.

**Week 16:**

Mon. May 1:

Read before class: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), pgs. 11-17, 60-65, 126-130, 136-142.

Wed. May 3:

Read before class: Eva Feder Kittay, "Taking Dependency Seriously," *Hypatia* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pgs. 8-29.

THURSDAY May 4:

Read before class: Charles Mills, "Contract of Breach: Repairing the Racial Contract," Chapter 4 (pgs. 106-133) of *Contract and Domination* (2007).

Fri. May 5: \*Discussion section.

**Week 17:**

Mon. May 8:

In class essay #4.